

TAB

REPORTS APPRAISAL CHECK-LIST

Can you justify the need for every report that you require, and every item in each of these reports? If you are developing a new reporting requirement, or are the parent of one in existence, take a few moments to ask yourself these questions:

1. Does the report and individual items therein duplicate existing reports or items in other reports?
2. Is the information required by your office appropriate to its assigned functions, responsibilities, and authority?
3. Is the information required by your office actually and actively used as a basis for actions, plans, or decisions, and do these uses fully justify the cost required to prepare the report?
4. Is information reported in more detail, submitted more frequently, or given wider distribution than is necessary to serve the purposes for which the report was established?
5. Does the need for the report result from an organizational or procedural problem which should be corrected, rather than reported?
6. Is the report designed to serve a purpose which could be accomplished more effectively some other way, such as through direct supervision or inspection?

Are you satisfied that answers to these questions fully justify continuance of reporting requirements you have originated, or are proposing? If "No," cancel or modify those reports of questionable value; if "Yes," see reverse for factors that should be considered.

REPORTS APPRAISAL CHECK-LIST (Cont.)

Once it has been determined that there is a valid need for the report, and each item therein, consideration should be given to the following:

1. Reporting Frequency. The reporting frequency must be consistent with the frequency with which you utilize the information reported. More frequent reporting is not justifiable.

2. Due Date. The date a report is due in your office should, if possible, be one convenient to the reporting activity. Whenever possible, end-of-month, end-of-quarter, and end-of-year reporting should be avoided since reporting workloads are heaviest at these times. Moreover, due dates should be based on working days, not calendar days.

3. Use of a Form. Consideration should be given to requiring that the report be submitted on a standardized form. A form offers these advantages:

a. Reports submitted on forms are considerably easier to prepare than letter-type reports.

b. Standard presentation of information enables you, the recipient, to locate items in the report more readily.

c. Instructions for preparation and submission of the report can be placed on the form for ready reference.

d. Forms are not subject to the same mail and file processing as letter-type material. They can be pre-addressed thereby eliminating the need for transmittal letters.

4. Report Directive. Consideration should be given to the adequacy of directives requiring reports. Remember the proportion: "The quality of a report coming into an office is directly proportional to the quality of the directive requiring its submission." Consider these points:

a. PROVIDING A
SINGLE SOURCE
OF INSTRUCTIONS

Cancel all previous directives which required the report, incorporating necessary past instructions in the new directive as an aid to personnel preparing reports.

b. PURPOSE
AND USE

State clearly the purposes or uses of the data being collected. The office which prepares the report needs to know the purposes and uses to (1) assure that the data reported will accomplish the objectives intended, and (2) make more accurate decisions in doubtful cases.

REPORTS APPRAISAL CHECK-LIST (Cont.)

c. REPORT TITLE Indicate the correct title of the report for later identification. Titles should be descriptive of contents.

d. DUE DATE OF REPORT Specify the date on which the report is to arrive at its destination. For situation reports, specify how soon the report must be received after occurrence of the event. Establish a due date for a recurring report which allows the reporting workload to be more evenly distributed by the offices preparing and receiving the report.

e. PERIOD OR SITUATION COVERED Specify the period of time, 'as of' date, or precise situation to be covered by the report. If data from several different reports are to be correlated, assure that the periods covered in these reports are comparable.

f. FIRST SUBMISSION OF THE REPORT Specify when the requirement becomes effective, such as the date that the first recurring report is to be received, or the first period to be covered.

g. TERMINATION OF REPORT For a temporary report, specify exactly when it is to be discontinued.

h. PREPARING ACTIVITIES State specifically the types of activities which are to prepare the report.

i. DISTRIBUTION Specify the number of copies to be prepared. Specify where each copy is to be sent.

j. FORMAT (IF NO FORM IS PROVIDED) Specify the format for the items to be reported to (1) help insure uniformity in data reported and (2) simplify the transcription, comparison, evaluation, or other use of the data when it is received.

REPORTS APPRAISAL CHECK-LIST (Cont.)

k. USE OF FORM

a. Be sure the form includes information on where the report is to be forwarded, and from whom it is sent ('from' and 'to' information), in order to avoid use of a separate transmittal letter. Request offices not to submit a covering transmittal letter with reports prepared on forms.

b. Specify where preparing offices are to secure supplies of the form, and the requisitioning procedure.

l. SOURCE OF DATA

Specify the source from which the information is to be obtained to (1) assist the preparing office in easy compilation, and (2) insure comparable data from all activities.

m. PROCEDURES FOR COMPILING

Specify recommended procedures for obtaining and compiling the data. This will (1) aid preparing offices to use the best methods, and (2) insure accuracy and consistency of the report.

n. WORDING

Give clear instructions on each item to be reported. Use simple active or imperative verbs (as 'Enter the total cost...'). Give only one instruction in a single sentence. Keep the sentence concise. Be sure that the instructions can be interpreted in only one way.

At this point it should be obvious that sound reporting systems depend upon your consideration of many factors. This is your guide. Refer to it - don't "bury" it.

Our objectives: Fewer reports, better reports, at less cost!